



**New Jersey Chapter
The Wildlife Society**

<http://wildlife.org/new-jersey/>



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Commissioner Catherine R. McCabe
401 E. State St.
7th Floor, East Wing
P.O. Box 402
Trenton, NJ 08625-0402

Dear Commissioner McCabe,

The New Jersey Chapter of The Wildlife Society (NJTWS) would like to express our concern regarding the recently signed Administrative Order 2018-24 and Executive Order No. 34 which directs the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to close all state-owned property, including DEP-managed wildlife management areas, forests, parks, and recreation areas to bear hunting.

NJTWS supports the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's implementation of the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy (CBBMP). The CBBMP serves as a guiding doctrine for the New Jersey Fish and Game Council to set resident black bear management and conservation goals. The CBBMP relies on scientific data collected by wildlife biologists since 1980 to develop management recommendations to maintain a healthy resident black bear population in New Jersey.

Over the past 30 years, the resident black bear population has been increasing and expanding its range in New Jersey. This increasing trend in the black bear population is complicated by the fact that New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the US. Given the importance of public safety, the CBBMP also provides guidance on maintaining sustainable black bear densities while minimizing human-bear conflicts.

The Wildlife Society (TWS), founded in 1937, is an international non-profit scientific and educational association dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Our mission is to enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of wildlife resources for the benefit of society. The Wildlife Society encourages professional growth through certification, peer-review publications, conferences, and working groups.

Management actions recommended by the CBBMP include public education and outreach, research, control of human-derived food sources, and both lethal and non-lethal control. This multidisciplinary approach aims to safeguard people and property using a variety of management tools including endorsement of a regulated hunting season on black bears. NJTWS recognizes and supports sustainable hunting as a critical aspect of the CBBMP. In prior years, approximately 40% of black bear harvest occurred on state-owned land. The implementation of the ban will undoubtedly affect the distribution of harvest and reduce hunting pressure on public areas where people choose to recreate (i.e. hike, fish, bird-watch). While hunting is not the only method to manage black bears, we feel that hunting is a crucial management tool to be used in conjunction with other non-lethal approaches, such as black bear outreach and education for New Jersey residents.

From a conservation perspective, hunters also provide financial stability to land acquisition projects, habitat enhancement/restoration, research, and management programs of wildlife through the annual purchases of licenses, permits, stamps, and taxes. In New Jersey, hunter's recreational activity, also works as a carefully regulated management tool to help wildlife biologists meet black bear population objectives. We encourage the State to consider the effects of eliminating hunting as a management tool on state-owned lands. Eliminating this tool via a hunting ban may influence the efficacy of the CBBMP.

The New Jersey Chapter of the Wildlife Society strongly urges reconsideration of Administrative Order 2018-24 to allow the CBBMP to be implemented across both public and private land as intended.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Freiday".

Elizabeth Ciuzio Freiday, CWB®
President
New Jersey Chapter of The Wildlife Society

Cc:

The Honorable Philip Murphy
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